

The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D. C. 20505

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Exemption Exempted  
81-9346

Memo  
Chrono

15 December 1981

Dear Charlie,

Enclosed is what we talked about. The material on Soviet Military Bridging might be of use for presentation by satellite.

Yours,

*Bill*

William J. Casey

The Honorable Charles Wick  
Director, United States  
Communication Agency  
Washington, D.C. 20547

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Soviet Military Bridging

The Soviet military has placed great emphasis on equipment and troop training for river crossing operations. This is especially true for the European theater of operations where numerous rivers are potential obstacles to military operations. The Soviets have active river crossing units for each army and front and have large reserve stockpiles of ponton and prefabricated bridging in Eastern Europe and the western USSR. These stockpiles have been significantly expanded during the 1970s. (U)

The two major types of military bridges are the ponton bridge and the prefabricated fixed bridge. The role of the ponton bridge regiment, supported by assault crossing units, is to rapidly bridge major water obstacles to ensure a high tempo of advance for Soviet combat forces. There are more than 20 Soviet ponton bridge regiments in the region opposite NATO. Each of these regiments has from 400 to 700 meters of tactical bridging at its disposal. (U)

The PMP floating bridge, the model held by almost all of these units, has a capacity of 60 metric tons, sufficient to support tanks and other heavy military equipment. The PMP ponton bridge is based on a four-section unit which is transported in a folded form. The units unfold automat-

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ically when launched, and are then joined to form a bridge. A 216-meter-long bridge, long enough to span most European rivers, can be assembled in as little as 30 minutes. (U)

Soviet assault crossing units consist of amphibious vehicles and ferries capable of transporting personnel and heavy equipment. They are used primarily in the assault crossing of rivers to secure bridgeheads for advancing combat formations and follow-on ponton bridge units. Deployed similarly to ponton bridge regiments, there are more than 20 assault crossing units in the region opposite NATO. There are two primary assault crossing vehicles. The PTS is a tracked amphibious vehicle capable of transporting 70 troops. The GSP heavy amphibious ferry transports heavy equipment such as tanks and missile equipment, and can be put into full operation in as little as three minutes. (U)

The Soviets have stockpiled prefabricated road and rail bridge components which in wartime would be used to replace destroyed bridges or to construct additional river crossing points. The bridges would be used primarily in the rear areas to facilitate the rapid resupply of engaged combat forces. These prefabricated bridge stockpiles consist of transportable sections of bridging which, when assembled, are considered to be semipermanent. These bridges are stockpiled in more than 30 locations in East Germany and

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Poland, along the major lines of communications from the Soviet Union to the NATO area. (U)

The Soviets also have stockpiles of the NZhM-56--a heavy duty rail and road ponton bridge. Most of these stockpiles are located in the western Soviet Union. In wartime, they would be used to replace damaged bridges on major road and rail lines of communication to the European theater of operations. (U)

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